

**California Wildlife Habitat Relationships System**  
**California Department of Fish and Wildlife**  
**California Interagency Wildlife Task Group**

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RED PHALAROPE

*Phalaropus fulicarius*

Family: SCOLOPACIDAE  
B656

Order: CHARADRIIFORMES

Class: AVES

Written by: T. Kucera, 1998

#### DISTRIBUTION, ABUNDANCE, SEASONALITY

Common to abundant spring (April-June) and fall (July-November) transient the length of the state along the coast in near-shore and offshore waters (Small 1994). Irregularly uncommon to common in winter. Migration is mainly over the open ocean, but often seen in bays and estuaries along the coast, and on salt evaporation ponds. Rare on freshwater and alkaline lakes in the interior. Most pelagic of the phalaropes (Hayman et al. 1986). Breeds near the coasts of the Arctic Ocean.

#### SPECIFIC HABITAT REQUIREMENTS

**Feeding:** Main diet components are aquatic insects; also takes fish and marine invertebrates at sea (Ehrlich et al. 1988). Feeds on open ocean, also near coast and in bays and estuaries and salt evaporating ponds (Small 1994).

**Cover:** Mostly pelagic

**Reproduction:** Nests on marshy tundra near freshwater in arctic (Hayman et al. 1986, Ehrlich et al. 1988).

**Water:** Has salt glands, and therefore can drink seawater (Ehrlich et al. 1988).

**Pattern:** Most pelagic of the phalaropes; rarely found inland except after severe storms (Small 1994).

#### SPECIES LIFE HISTORY

**Activity Patterns:** Yearlong activity; may feed at night and during the day (Hayman et al. 1986).

**Seasonal Movements/Migration:** Make some of the longest migrations in the world. Summer in the arctic and winter off the coast of Chile (Hayman et al. 1986).

**Home Range:** Not known.

**Territory:** Loosely colonial on breeding grounds (Ehrlich et al. 1988). Mostly found singly or in small groups during migration.

**Reproduction:** Monogamous or serially or simultaneously polyandrous. Exhibit reversed sexual dimorphism; female lays 2-4 eggs then deserts and takes no part in incubation or caring for young (Oring 1986, Ehrlich et al. 1988).

**Niche:** Little information on predators; probably taken by a variety of raptors such as the peregrine falcon (*Falco peregrinus*). On breeding range, subject to predation from avian and mammalian predators.

## REFERENCES

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- Hayman, P., J. Marchant, and T. Prater. 1986. *Shorebirds: an identification guide to the waders of the world*. Houghton Mifflin Company, Boston.
- Oring, L. W. 1986. Avian polyandry. *Current Ornithology* 3:309-351.
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Life history accounts for species in the California Wildlife Habitat Relationships (CWHR) System were originally published in: Zeiner, D.C., W.F.Laudenslayer, Jr., K.E. Mayer, and M. White, eds. 1988-1990. *California's Wildlife*. Vol. I-III. California Department of Fish and Game, Sacramento, California. Updates are noted in accounts that have been added or edited since original publication.